

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

By W. M. DICKIE, M. D., *Director*

Fourth of July Wounds Often Productive of Tetanus.—Many years ago large numbers of children in the United States died of tetanus following Fourth of July wounds caused by toy pistols and blank cartridges. In 1903 there were at least three hundred and twenty-five such deaths in children of the United States, most of these cases and deaths following injuries received through the use of blank cartridges. The source of the tetanus spore in such cases has not been fully established, but it is believed that the spore is on the skin of the victim and is injected into the wound made by the blank cartridge. The character of such a wound makes it particularly dangerous in the development of tetanus. The American Medical Association many years ago started a campaign for the observation of a safer and saner Fourth of July. Through the agitation and the publicity of statistics practically every city in the United States enacted some kind of an ordinance regulating the sale of fireworks and explosives. These restrictive measures have been productive of most excellent results in the reduction of deaths and injuries due to these causes.

There is an indication, however, that there is a growing tendency for some cities to rescind the protective measures that have been in force for so many years. The American Museum of Safety, in a survey of six hundred cities in forty-three states, in 1927, found that 195 deaths and 3,179 injuries occurred from the Fourth of July celebration of that year. Among the killed were thirty-one children under six years of age and 122 between the ages of six and twenty; forty-eight of the victims were burned, their clothing having been ignited by fireworks which were supposed to be of the harmless type. Toy pistols and blank cartridges caused forty-six deaths, fire-crackers twenty-two deaths, and the eating of fireworks by small children caused sixteen deaths.

Health officers are somewhat concerned over the tendency to nullify local legislation pertaining to the sale of fireworks, particularly toy pistols and blank cartridges. Health officers take this stand because of the great dangers associated with the development of tetanus and lockjaw through the use of these disastrous toys. In the interest of the public health, it is important that the lives of California children be protected against tetanus which may be caused by wounds from toy pistols, caps and blank cartridges.

Now is Season to be on Guard Against Mussel Poisoning.—In July, 1927, following the appearance of 102 cases of food poisoning after eating mussels gathered along the California coast, the State Department of Public Health, in cooperation with the Hooper Foundation for Medical Research, began a series of investigations into this type of poisoning which have been carried on almost continuously since that time. While the exact cause of the poisonous condition in these shellfish has not been determined definitely, it is certain that mussels gathered in the midsummer months may be highly poisonous and the general public should be warned against the apparent danger in eating mussels at this season of the year. Recent examination of these shellfish indicates that a more toxic condition is present in mussels at the present time. Most cases of this poisoning have occurred during the month of July and as a matter of safety mussels gathered during the month, particularly, should be regarded with suspicion.

The investigations have revealed the following facts:

(1) The poison is not formed by bacteria nor is it due to any parasite, so far as is known.

(2) It is not due to asphyxiation or postmortem changes resultant from exposure to sun or changes in the tides.

(3) It is probably the result of a metabolism disease influenced by the food and spawning condition of the shellfish.

(4) Poisonous mussels can not be distinguished from sound mollusks either by appearance, behavior or cooking.

(5) Mussels may become poisonous within a few days and may remain so for several weeks.

(6) During the winter months, December to March, the poison disappears only to reappear late in March.

Health officers are advised to report by telephone or telegraph any cases of mussel poisoning that may occur within the territory under their jurisdiction, making certain to obtain samples of the shellfish which should be forwarded at once to Dr. K. F. Meyer, Director, Hooper Foundation for Medical Research, San Francisco.

Notable declines are seen in the prevalence of chickenpox, mumps, scarlet fever and whooping-cough.

The absence of epidemic poliomyelitis this summer is conspicuous.

Another case of tularemia has appeared.

The typhoid season is here.

CALIFORNIA BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

By C. B. PINKHAM, M. D.

Secretary of the Board

In addition to the bills amending the Medical Practice Act, the following bills of interest to the medical profession were acted on:

Senate Bill 10 (Murphy) relative to aged pensioners—died in committee.

Senate Bill 29 (Crowley) establishing a professorship of nursing at University of California—died in committee.

Senate Bill 30 (Crowley) adding a new section to the Pharmacy Act relating to the registration of drug stores—passed (Chapter 156).

Senate Bill 36 (Inman) relating to county health officers, employment of public health nurses and dental hygienists by local boards of supervisors—passed (Chapter 199).

Senate Bill 37 (Inman) permits boards of trustees, etc., to employ public health nurses and dental hygienists—passed (Chapter 200).

Senate Bill 52 (Crowley) relating to certifications of persons other than registered nurses engaged in that occupation—died in committee.

Senate Bill 102 (Lyon) amending the present act preventing manufacture, etc., of adulterated or misbranded foods or liquor—passed (Chapter 202).

Senate Bill 103 (Rochester) creating a commission to select a state hospital site—died on file.

Senate Bill 104 (Crowley) an act to regulate nursing and placing supervision in the newly-created Department of Professional and Vocational Standards—died on file.

Senate Bill 105 (Crowley) amending the Pharmacy Act requiring prescriptions to be filled by duly regis-